
ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM

THE ANARCHIST LABOR MOVEMENT

A LIVING WAGE

"To each according to their needs."

WHAT IS A "LIVING WAGE"? It is a minimum quality of life which is due to all people. LW = FOOD + CLOTHING + SHELTER + HEALTH + TRANSPORTATION. It is what you need to get to work/school and be productive. It is something you need for "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness". The workers organizations fight for this as a basic "human right" for all people (workers, families, retirees, *etc.*). It is a measure of the humanity of a social system.

WELL-BEING

In economics, we can judge consumption desire as things we "want" (or "wants"). The term wants also infers the "consumer society" (arbitrary consumption), and the manipulation of desire through commercial advertising. We distinguish wants from needs. "Needs" = things we depend upon to sustain our daily lives. Having our "needs" met is essential to the concept of "well-being." Anarchists seek to build a free society, but there can be no freedom without equality and well-being (Bakunin). No one is free unless we are all free, and, the well-being of all is measured by the well-being of each person. Under capitalism, workers are considered a commodity. They are paid as little as the employer can get away with. The capitalist increases their profits at the expense of the well-being of workers and working class families. Mutual well-being in an Anarchist society will be maintained by solidarity and mutual aid (Kropotkin). In the capitalist system, it must be won by organizing, direct action, and social revolution. The workers organization is a membership organization, not a service (servant, welfare) organization. Therefore the members help each other: "*one for all and all for one.*" Our natural feelings of solidarity mean that we judge the quality of life by our own personal experiences (by empathy). Thus, the saying "*freedom to starve is no freedom at all.*" And by assuring well-being to our fellow human beings, we build the free society.

FOOD

Food/nutrition is the most basic element of well-being because it gives us energy to do physical and brain work and activities. It is essential to learning in school and at work. And, it fosters good judgement, co-operation, and ethics. Parents looking at their starving children have formed the basis for most social revolutions. In capitalist society, Malthusians (Malthus, Essay on Population, 1798) tried to argue that starving to death was a natural population control for the working classes. Contrary to this convenient rationalization, capitalism has historically paid workers just enough to keep them working until they die on the job and not always enough to keep them from starving to death. This meant the whole family working and taking charity. Women and children were assigned especially dangerous factory jobs tending machines because of their small hands. A worker could loose their job at the whim of an employer or if they got sick (*e.g.*, sick from hunger, overwork or unhealthy working conditions). Poverty was made a crime by the government and the unemployed were put in a type of jail prison called a work house where they were worked to death in sweatshop conditions. Employers lent you food/goods from a company store against future wages, so people were often living in debt, and unpaid debt was punishable as a crime. Anarchists point out that hunger reflects workers not being paid for the full value of their work. It reflects unfair/unequal distributions of wealth under the capitalist class system simply because rich people can inherit the wealth/profits stolen by their ancestors (even if they never worked). It reflects the tremendous inequity of the distribution of food and the enormous waste of food in storage, transportation and store shelves which could feed people rather than rot. Much more food could be produced locally for workers in farm districts near urban areas if corporate farming were collectivized and served local industry rather than export trade; and small farms were preserved and developed for local use instead of turned into housing subdivisions for the rich. We have also not begun to develop the potential of urban gardens as a type of park under resident self-management of the free community. We also propose more farmers markets and public cafeterias which are free to workers and students.

CLOTHING/SHELTER

Clothing is not just something to cover nakedness, but protection from the climate you live in, school or work attire, and clean clothing to promote hygiene and health. Uniforms, and sometimes tools/vehicles, are required by bosses for a

worker to show up for work, with the cost borne by the worker. Shelter can be a safe place to sleep so you don't get mugged or worse; hopefully with hot meals, water/hygiene, and sanitation. The welfare state no longer pays an unemployed or homeless person enough to eat for a month, let alone be housed and many homeless people live on the streets because existing shelters are unsafe or they have a physical or mental illness which is not treated. Government Census counters grossly underestimate homeless populations, especially, since the police regularly harass homeless encampments and steal or trash all their belongings. Many poor people live in overcrowded and/or slum housing or illegal housing units like garages or converted closets just to afford a place to stay. The government considers over 1.5 persons-per-room to be overcrowded (1 person-per-room is a couple with a baby in a 1 bedroom dwelling) in a rented or owned home ("owned" usually means "mortgaged"—"owned" by the bank). This includes most working class housing in urban areas. They do not take responsibility for seeing that enough housing is built that working class people can afford. So-called public housing is being torn down or down-sized, and so-called non-profit housing corporations are often a way to funnel housing money to local government political machines. Rent control is being abolished and "stable" working class communities are being displaced by gentrification. Under community self-management housing would be built and apportioned based on need. Housing should be neither mansions nor cupboards, but under 1 person-per-room of space per household for an apartment or loft space and enough housing so workers can live in the community where they work. Residents will oversee their homes through residents associations (like a tenants union). We must also expropriate money from the rich to shelter/house, employ, and hospitalize the homeless and people with social problems defunded, discarded and criminalized by the capitalists. We hope to build a society which mitigates the conditions which created these problems under the current system, and cares for those whose problems remain.

HEALTH

Health care (including medicine, injuries and disabilities) is necessary for people to remain productive workers and students. It and elderly care are part of the labor cost of production which capitalists often force on workers. People need to be healthy when they enter the population, the workplace or the school so they don't spread sickness to others. It is a public good—Illness is most virulent in dense populations. Capitalist "wellness" propaganda is a gross hypocrisy by profiteers of misery who are busy trying to speed up work, eliminate the 8-hour work day (mandatory overtime), and eliminate overtime pay. Health must also include hygiene/sanitation (clean people and environment) and reproductive freedom (including reproductive health information and birth control on demand). We become human when we are a *viable life* when autonomous from our mothers womb. Reproductive freedom makes women *voluntary* parents, sexually equal to men—It can also help protect against Sexually Transmitted Diseases. It gives parents more opportunities before procreation—procreation can be delayed until parents are better able to raise a family. It allows parents to limit their household size to a number they can afford to take care of, which also helps to reduce inter-generational poverty. It promotes "social hygiene" by preventing gross birth defects (or children from rape or incest) and protecting a woman's health/life. Abortion should not be the birth control of choice if women receive proper health education, care, and respect without sexist puritanical harassment or attempted humiliation. Under worker self-management all aspects of a living wage would be funded by your workplace. This would include adoption and schooling for parent-less children and free child care for workers (including inoculations for disease, dental, and optical). Too many children are now medicated for social control under the existing "nanny-state". A free society tries to develop a child's abilities and interests, not control them. Similarly, drug and alcohol abuse may reflect a lack of healthy opportunities to enjoy life, burnout from being abused, or a loss of hope (and false promises of feeling better). Capitalists (corporate and criminal) profit by selling drugs, not from healthy people. There is something seriously wrong with society where every body thinks they need to be self-medicated to cope with every day life. Workers need to respect each other by not threatening each other by their self-abuse (*e.g.*, substance abuse). Part of public health is helping people when they have problems like this, so we will provide medical care instead of incarceration for personal health problems, including mental health.

TRANSPORTATION

Finally, transportation. to work, school and grocery is essential since it is increasingly unaffordable to live in cities and almost impossible to find affordable housing near where you work or go to school. Automobile use is becoming less affordable with gasoline prices surpassing \$4/gallon and growing traffic congestion, but the ability to get to work and the grocery store are still matters of survival. Communities have exacerbated this problem by not providing public sidewalks or bicycle lanes, even in residential neighborhoods where students want to walk or bike to school (students who must ride the bus to school study/learn less). Public transportation is often meager, unreliable, or non-existent (especially, for suburban/exurban commuters). Carpooling is also often hard to organize. Parents with long commutes spend less time with their families and are more likely to have problems. Historically, suburbanization, "urban renewal" and gentrification have been a physical aspect of the class struggle, with workers forced to live in areas which the rich don't want, usually, renting from an absentee landlord or slumlord. Their communities also had inferior transportation. Self-managed communities will pool their resources to maintain quality public transportation between their residences, workplaces, schools, groceries, *etc.*. Workers must demand transit spending equal to spending on highways for the rich.